



**GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Human Rights Council
31st Session**

Check against delivery

Item 5: Human Rights bodies and mechanism – General Debate

Special Procedures have an important role to play in the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe. It is crucial to avoid politicization in the appointment of mandate holders and to preserve their correct functioning.

In this regard, the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL) and the Europe-Third World Centre (CETIM) wish to call your attention to the grave allegations recently made by the highest representatives of the United Kingdom's government regarding the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

In February the group of experts determined that the Wikileaks founder, Mr. Julian Assange, is arbitrarily deprived of his liberty by Sweden and the United Kingdom, and that he is entitled to his freedom of movement and to compensation. In response to these findings, Prime Minister David Cameron and Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond publicly declared that the decision was ridiculous and that the members of the Working Group were, and I quote, “lay people”.

Such unprecedented personal attacks against UN Mandate Holders not only undermines the fundamental rights of Mr. Assange and the dignity of the Working Group, but it also erodes the credibility of the Human Rights System as a whole. These offensive remarks set a dangerous precedent that has global repercussions. They threaten the efficacy of the future work of all Special Procedures and should not be tolerated, especially when they come from a member of this Council that should be encouraging respect for human rights by all other UN member states.

Such an unjustifiable reaction represents a further example of the double standards applied by some countries, and in particular Western countries, when it comes to human rights and that too often discredits the work of the Council. Just few months ago, during the 29th HRC session, both Sweden and UK co-sponsored a cross regional statement delivered by Norway on behalf of 65 Member States calling for the immediate response and follow up by states on decisions by the Working Group on

Arbitrary Detention on individual cases.

We urge the Human Rights Council to defend its bodies and mechanisms and to call upon the United Kingdom and Sweden to respect the authority and integrity of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention even if, and when, they dislike their decisions.

March 16th 2016